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# COACHING PREFERENCES OF GENERATION “Y”

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A Research Project  
Presented to the Faculty of  
The George L. Graziadio  
School of Business and Management  
Pepperdine University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science  
in  
Organization Development

---

by  
Kevin C. Knight  
August 2010

This research project, completed by

KEVIN C. KNIGHT

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE  
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Over the last twenty years coaching has emerged as a leading personal and professional development tool for individuals and corporations. The recent popularity in coaching stems from employees' needs for greater goal achievement or individuals' needs to enhance growth, implement change, and to reach greater fulfillment in their business or personal lives.

This study looked at the coaching preferences of Generation "Y". As coaches prepare to work with Generation "Y" clients, it is important to understand how this new generation differs from previous generations. This knowledge could assist coaches in customizing their approach to address client needs and expectations, and lead to greater results for increased client capability.

The data used to support this research were gathered from surveys conducted with 51 members of Generation "Y." The results were reviewed in structured interviews with three subject matter experts (SMEs) who were experienced providers of coaching services to Generation "Y." After the data were analyzed, several key themes were extracted and summarized. It was found that members of Generation "Y" preferred: coaching from someone outside of their workplace, that is, a professional/executive coach or expert in his or her chosen field; coaching that occurred face to face, once a month, performed during business hours and which lasted less than an hour; coaching that relates to their profession, that is, communication skills, leadership, and how to build productive relationships and obtain promotions (career guidance); coaching around professional/personal growth; and also around creative problem solving.

Small sample size limited the validity of findings. The questionnaire was only completed by 51 respondents and as such cannot be used to generalize about the Generation "Y" population at large.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Over the last twenty years coaching has emerged as a leading personal and professional development tool for individuals and corporations (Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000). While it has been termed different names such as executive coaching, life coaching, and shadow consulting, in the end these can all be seen as different names for similar practices. The recent popularity in coaching stems from employees' need for greater goal achievement or individuals' need to enhance growth, implement change, and to reach greater fulfillment in their business or personal lives. In the mid 1990's the economy was very strong and the market grew tremendously for leadership gurus, self-help books, and coaching (Bono, 2009). After seeing what a powerful intervention coaching can be on an individual level, executives and organizations increasingly utilized this tool as a way to generate organizational-wide change by creating a supportive environment for employees to learn and grow.

Coaching is a coach-client relationship with one purpose, to achieve more by enhancing one's performance. The International Coaching Federation (ICF Web site, 2010) defines coaching as "partnering with clients in a thought provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential." A coach is concerned with helping others and does so by sharing with them his or her wisdom and compassion. Like teachers, coaches provide learning opportunities by offering constructive, non-judgmental, and balanced feedback. An executive or personal coach is also similar to an athletic

coach where the focus is on setting and reaching measurable goals with the idea that the person who is coached will perform to a greater capacity if appropriately guided through expert facilitation rather than left to his or her own devices (Hunt & Weintraub, 2002).

Many books and articles have been written on the skills or qualities that can enhance a coach's ability to be more effective. Whitworth, Kimsey-House, and Sandhal (2007) in their seminal book, *Co-Active Coaching* state, "coaching is a form of conversation with unspoken ground rules regarding certain qualities that must be present: respect, openness, compassion, empathy, and a rigorous commitment to truth" (p. 20).

An important skill for a coach is to be an effective listener (Cashman, 2001). The quality of listening can be found in many studies of coaching. Obviously, a coach listens to the words a client is speaking to help him or her understand and follow a conversation. However, listening to hear the underlying tone of what a client is communicating, to hear the fear or hesitation in a client's voice, to help him or her find deeper and underlying meanings to help further his or her growth is the type of listening that is effective. Listening, in this regard, has been termed "active listening", and is widely embraced by coaches as a foundational skill for a successful practice (Whitworth, et al., 2007).

OD consultants have been coaching clients since the inception of the field. The term coaching however, has only been used since the 1990's. Prior to this, client feedback was the term most commonly used to describe this situation. Though the term coaching is new, it has however been practiced for years. In the

infancy of OD, client coaching or feedback was happening in the context of effective OD interventions that dealt with the role of the leader in a change project (Minahan, 2006).

### **Coaching Generations**

For the first time in the history of work, the workforce is comprised of a few very different generations. Simultaneously managing the different generations of workers is nothing if not challenging. In order to effectively manage a multigenerational workforce, it is essential to identify the characteristics that define each generation (Pekala, 2010). Such an awareness, of a client's generational characteristics, could help a coach's effectiveness.

In part, people are products of the generational values in which they are raised. For instance, an individual born in 1970 will have different opinions and values about life and work than an individual born in 1999 whose values are shaped by the political, technological and social ideologies of that time. Awareness of this will help a coach's ability to work more effectively.

Different generations have been labeled different names. Baby Boomers are the generation of Americans who were born in a "baby boom" following World War II. The Boomers were born between 1944 and 1964. This is the generation with the broadest range of ages (spanning twenty years) as other generations are categorized within narrower time periods. The oldest of the Boomer generation is now facing retirement and the youngest of the generation is now managing the eldest of what is known as generation "X" (Bell, 2007).

Generation “X” was born between 1965 and 1977 and has an individualistic culture that came of age in the era of two-income families, rising divorce rates, and a faltering economy. Many women with children were joining the workforce at this time, thus the term “latch-key” kid became common place. As a result, Generation “X” is independent, resourceful, and self sufficient. In the workplace, Generation “X” values freedom and responsibility. Many in this generation display a casual disdain for authority and resist structured work hours. They can dislike being micromanaged and embrace a hands-off management philosophy (Jurkiewicz, 2000).

Those from Generation “Y,” also known as the Millennials, were born in the mid to late 1980’s and are just now entering the workforce. Raised during the birth of the internet, this generation is very technological savvy. Due to the technologically rapid environment they were born into, they are able to focus on many things at once. In addition, Generation “Y” believes in taking care of the planet with an ideology of reducing, reusing, and recycling (Streeter, 2007).

As coaches prepare to work with Generation “Y” clients, it is important to understand how this new generation differs from previous generations. This knowledge could assist coaches in customizing their approach to address client needs and expectations, and lead to greater results for increased client capability.

### **Research Question**

This research explored the question: What are coaching preferences of Generation “Y”?

**Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to explore coaching preferences of individuals from Generation “Y”.

**Research Importance**

Three points of view can be considered when ascertaining the importance of this study: coaches, coachees, and the academic field of Organizational Development. For coaches, findings from this study may provide valuable tools to improve their coaching techniques when working with Generation “Y” and further client efficacy. Coachees will benefit from this study by gaining greater clarity on their goals, and also through the improved skills of their coaches to help them gain greater self mastery (efficacy). In summary, popular approaches and prevailing wisdom are in need of a stronger research base determining key coaching preferences of Generation “Y.” This information could strengthen the foundation of knowledge in the field. Further, it would provide coaches with important information to instill greater confidence in their practice.

**Research Outline**

The purpose of this introduction was to demonstrate the need to identify coaching preferences of Generation “Y”, and explain the importance of this research and the value that its findings provide.

Chapter two will review existing research and present relevant literature around coaching preferences of Generation “Y”. First the chapter will provide an overview of coaching, including definitions of coaching, models of coaching,

primary coaching skills, relationship characteristics, and coaching outcomes.

Second, this chapter discusses the different generations found in the workplace today and reviews their primary characteristics. Third, the chapter presents what is known about coaching members of Generation “Y”.

Chapter three details the design of the study and methodology used. It will present a description of the two sample groups—individuals of Generation “Y” and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), data collection—through survey development and creation of an interview protocol, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter four will describe the findings of the research for the two sample groups, highlighting similarities and differences. Illustrative comments will be used to provide a richer understanding and interpretation of the data. Coaching preferences of Generation “Y” will be determined and presented.

Finally, Chapter five provides a summary of the findings, draws conclusions and interpretations of the research, and provides insights and recommendations for the benefit of coaches, coachees, and the field of OD. Limitations of the research will be cited and suggestions for further research will be made.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this research is to explore coaching preferences of individuals from Generation “Y.” This chapter reviews several areas of existing research in support of this study. First, the chapter will provide an overview of coaching, including definitions of coaching, models of coaching, primary coaching skills, relationship characteristics, and coaching outcomes or expectations. Second, this chapter discusses the different generations found in the workplace today and reviews their respective primary characteristics. Third, the chapter presents what is known about coaching members of Generation “Y”.

#### **Overview of Coaching**

In the 1990's, America experienced significant growth in the coaching industry that continues through today. Coaching is the act of building capacity in an individual to achieve short and long-term goals through a supportive professional relationship (Coaches Training Institute Web site, 2009). Coaching is a powerful tool for people to reach their goals, increase their self confidence, and improve their performance in their personal or professional lives (International Coaching Federation Web site, 2009). The philosophy of coaching is holistic and focuses on the personal growth and development of the client through various tools and regularly scheduled conversations. The coaching relationship stresses that the client is the expert on him or herself, able to ascertain what will bring the greatest satisfaction and quality to his or her life. As

such, the process is action-oriented and driven by the client (Whitworth, et al., 2007).

Coaching offers clients a way to learn and grow in a positive, supportive, and often intimate environment. It provides an opportunity to create a vision for life, and helps the coachee develop a road map to achieve it (Dutton, 1997). Coaching exists primarily as a process or tool to help people get to where they want to go in any part of their lives including such areas as: personal, career, education, relationships, finances, health, and spiritual goals (Witherspoon & White, 1996).

Also over the last two decades, OD Practitioners have placed more attention on the role of coaching and acknowledged the value it plays in organizational interventions. According to Minahan (2006), “the early 1990’s, saw the emergence of the literature on coaching, which has introduced coaching theory frames, methodologies, and an important measure of rigor that OD practitioners have never really had within reach before. In that regard, the evolution of coaching has been a major asset to OD. Coaching is an intervention at the individual level of the organization” (p. 5).

Cummings & Worley (2005) state, “Coaching can be seen as a specialized form of OD, one that is focused on using the principles of applied behavioral science to increase the capacity and effectiveness of individuals as opposed to groups or organizations. It is one of the fastest growing areas of OD practice” (p. 409). In 1994 it was estimated that there were 1,000 coaches in the world. This number grew to approximately 10,000 by the year 2000 with 80% of



the coaches residing in the United States (Leonard, 2000). There are an estimated 67,000 coaches practicing worldwide with the industry growing 20% per year (Coachville, 2010).

As popularized by Whitworth, et al. (2007) in their seminal book *Co-Active Coaching*, coaches assume strength and capability on the part of the client, not weakness, helplessness or dependence. Coaching is about achieving one's potential. Coaching is a form of conversation with unspoken ground rules regarding certain qualities that must be present: respect, openness, compassion, empathy, and a rigorous commitment to speaking the truth. A coaching conversation has certain beliefs built into it: that every situation has possibilities and that people really do have the power of choice in their lives. There are certain assumptions underlying the conversation as well. A key underlying coaching assumption is that a coachee has everything within him or herself to reach his or her goals.

### **Coaching Compared to Other Helping Relationships**

Given that coaching is still in its early ages of development as a profession it is hardly surprising that there is a lack of clarity and agreement around definitions and core competencies (Bluckert, 2009). One of these relates to the difference between coaching, mentoring, and therapy, and is discussed by many coaches in training and experienced practitioners. The topic has stimulated much debate due the similarities exhibited by each practice.

## **Coaching Compared to Mentoring**

Mentoring is a type of helping relationship that is often compared to coaching. According to Levinson, one of the first researchers to promote the benefits of mentoring, a mentor is someone who teaches, advises or sponsors a usually younger and less experienced protégé (Levinson, 1978). Mentoring generally involves a more skilled and experienced person who teaches, counsels and serves as a role model to someone less skilled for the purpose of personal or professional growth and development (Anderson, 1988; Ragins, 1997; Zey, 1984). The main goal of the mentor is to pass on his or her experience, knowledge and expertise to help the protégé develop his or skills and achieve his or goals.

Mentors differ from coaches by design. Mentors are typically used in a professional or personal setting that focuses on specific area or areas where the mentor has expertise. Coaches do not serve as experts but rather as aids for the client to identify key areas to work on and to help him or her to be accountable in achieving his or her goals. Mentors will more likely direct the path of the client whereas in coaching, the client holds the power.

According to Wilkins (2000), there are some primary differences between coaching and mentoring. Unlike mentors who give of their time without compensation, coaches are paid to engage in the coach-client relationship. Further, unlike mentors coaches do not give expert advice to clients. Mentors focus primarily on professional issues whereas coaches tend to have a more holistic life focus. Mentors are typically experienced in the field of the client while

coaches may know nothing about a client's industry, functional specialty or organization. Mentors tend to be specialists while coaches are usually generalists.

There are however some similarities between mentoring and coaching. Both are supportive, encouraging relationships that focus on the fulfillment of goals. Both require active listening, client questioning and discussion for effective results. In both relationships, a connection is usually formed that engenders trust and provides an arena of accountability (Wilkins, 2000).

### **Coaching Compared to Therapy**

Though they can appear similar, therapy and coaching differ. According to Williams (2007), "Coaching can look to the uninformed public like therapy because of their commonalities. They both seek to support the individual. They both are delivered in much the same way, through regular "face to face" or phone sessions. They both work to take a person from the place he or she is now to the place he or she wants to be" (p. 38).

While therapy and coaching may share a common intent to provide personal growth, their similarities end there. Therapy is vital for those with psychological challenges, particularly for pathology. Therapy works with the past seeking to ameliorate personal concerns with one's ideal self. Therapy operates from the point of view of health verses dysfunction. It relies on diagnosis which underscores the notion that the person is sick or unhealthy and needs to be made well. Williams (2007) makes the strong statement that therapy addresses things that one must fix, something within that is "broken," through a process of

uncovering and recovering. Coaching, he believes is for those who are healthy and self motivated. Coaching works in the present from the point of view that one has all within oneself to determine and reach new goals through a process of discovery. Both fields have their place and should not be confused.

### **Coaching Models**

The *Coaching Model* developed from the research of Wilkins (2000), describes three parts of coaching that must interact interdependently in order to develop the client to his or her greatest potential. These elements include purpose, process, and relationship between coach and client. The primary goal of coaching is to help the client to identify and to live according to his or her purpose, philosophical values, and priorities. The process uses the skills (communication, intuition, and connection) and strategies (consciousness, support and challenge) of coaching in a distinct way to aid and support the client. Finally, the unique relationship between the coach and client is the cornerstone of the *Coaching Model*. Wilkins believes that this relationship focuses on supporting the client unconditionally, serving as a trusted confidant, and offering support, honesty, awareness, action and truth telling free of judgment.

*Co-active Coaching* (Whitworth, et al., 2007) is a model based on four ideals: (a) the client is creative, resourceful and whole, and the coach uses questions to help the client access their internal wisdom, (b) the client's entire life is examined for fulfillment and balance, (c) the client determines the coaching agenda, (d) there is a mutual responsibility between the coach and client. The core philosophy is that the coach and client are equal and the relationship is "co-

active”. According to this model, the qualities a coach brings to the process are listening, intuition, curiosity, action and learning, and self-management.

### **Primary Coaching Skills**

Coaching requires masterful listening, attuned and adept, and the ability to maximize the listening interaction (Whitworth, et al., 2007). Listening is not simply passively hearing. There is action in listening, thus the term ‘active-listening’. Whitworth, et al. state that there are two aspects of listening in coaching, one is awareness and the other is impact.

The first aspect of listening stated by Whitworth, et al. lies in the awareness of what we hear. We receive information in what we hear with our ears, but we also listen with all the senses and with our intuition. We hear see and experience sounds, words, images, feeling and energy. What a coach hears can often not be found in a client’s words. Usually meaning can be found in the tone of a client’s voice, or what a client does not say may speak volumes, allowing the coach a deeper understanding of an issue. A good coach will be aware of this conversational activity and use it to assist client efforts to gain clarity.

The second aspect Whitworth, et al. state is what a coach does with his or her listening—it is the impact of a coach’s listening with a client. An experienced coach will not only be aware of what he or she is listening to, but will also be able to anticipate the impact he or she will have when he or she acts upon his or her awareness. Coaches make conscious choices about what to act upon and what to omit, or what can wait for more appropriate timing.

In addition to listening, coaches will exhibit the ability to ask powerful and probing questions (Goldberg, 1998). Powerful questions are short, simple, open-ended (how, what, who, when) and genuinely curious. The impact these questions have on the client should allow him or her to do the work, to understand the bigger picture, to create different options and to commit to his or her actions, thus resulting in the desired change.

Next a coach must encourage the client into action. According to Whitworth, et al. (2007), this can be accomplished by using a “coaching roadmap” that creates three states of client awareness: 1<sup>st</sup> stage, What’s going on (past or present)? 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, What could be (future)? 3<sup>rd</sup> stage, What’s next (present)? In the first stage, the coach will ask the client questions to establish a starting place. This is also where information and historical details of the proposed issue are gathered from the client. Once a clear sense of the issue or issues is accomplished, a coach can move the client into the second stage. In this “future” stage, a coach will move the client’s attention into new possibilities and have him or her declare what he or she wants by describing in detail the desired state: a goal. Once a goal is established, a coach can shift a client into the third and last stage, a shift from ideas to action. The client will state what he or she will do and when, make a plan, and adhere to an agreed deadline. The coach offers support and provides an arena of accountability to help the client successfully reach his or her goal.

## **Relationship Characteristics**

The relationship between coach and client is paramount in coaching. The relationship provides the foundation or “container” in which a client can grow and feel safe. Research (Deal, 2007; McAlpin & Wilkinson, 2009; Whitworth, et al., 2007; Wilkins, 2000) suggests a strong relationship will exhibit the following common characteristics or qualities. *Confidentiality* is a key condition for a safe and courageous conversation. An agreement to hold the coaching conversation confidential is one key component in building trust. *Trust* is built over time between coach and client as they learn to count on one another. Trust can be earned simply from being punctual to coaching sessions or from a pattern of reliability. Trust in a coach is earned through his or her support. *Honesty* (or speaking the truth) lies at the core of coaching. One cannot achieve trust or confidentiality without it. Often, a client is sufficiently wrapped up in his or her habitual patterns that he or she cannot see the truth. This can be one of the reasons a client may seek a coach. Coachees rely on a coach’s honest perspective to help them move forward.

## **Coaching Outcomes or Expectations**

Clients bring a desire for change to coaching. According to the co-active model, “A desired outcome for a coach is to help clients articulate their dreams, desires and aspirations, help them clarify their mission, purpose and goals, and help them achieve that outcome” (Whitworth, et al., 2007, p. 25). Though a client may come with a desire to change, he or she may not know how to get there. A coach will assist in client change by shaping his or her desires into clear, specific,

obtainable goals. This is accomplished early in the process by establishing clear expectations. A coach and client will work together to develop strategies to achieve the desired change.

To help a client change, clear expectations are made between coach and client at the beginning of the process. A coach will typically begin a working relationship with an initial process that first sets client expectations and orients him or her to self discovery. This foundation setting process familiarizes clients with the coaching process, provides an opportunity to design the alliance and begins the work of clarifying client issues and goals.

According to Block (1981), once the client is familiar with the coaching process, an agreement or “contract” is established between coach and client. The contract usually contains agreements on when coaching conversations will occur, how much they will cost, desired outcomes or goals, and clarifies what a client can expect from the experience. This starting point can be crucial to a healthy coaching relationship and establishes a clear sense of where the client is now. Without this initial investment in the relationship, progress or change will be difficult or haphazard.

### **Generational Overview**

For the first time in the history of work, the workforce is comprised of a few very different generations. Simultaneously managing the different generations of workers is nothing if not challenging. In order to effectively manage a multigenerational workforce, it is essential to identify the characteristics that



define each generation (Pekala, 2010). Such an awareness, of a client's generational characteristics, could help a coach's effectiveness.

A generation is defined by demographics and key life events that have shaped, to some degree, distinctive generational characteristics. Although there is disagreement on the exact birthdates that define each generation, there is a consensus that birthdates determine to which generation one is assigned: employees over 60 in 2006 belong to the Traditionalist generation; those in their mid-40's to 60's are Baby Boomers; employees in their late 20's to early 40's are Generation X; and finally, the new generation entering the workplace in their early 20's or younger, is generally called Generation "Y". These are briefly described below.

**Baby Boomers.** Having been raised by Traditionalist parents, Baby Boomers entered the workplace with a strong work ethic (Bell, 2007). Women entered the workforce in large numbers and the dual career couple, with highly educated women working alongside men was born. The youngest Baby Boomer is in the 40's and the oldest is now in the 60's. There are 76 million Baby Boomers in the workplace today and they represent a great deal of the knowledge and experience. Baby Boomers value personal growth, hard work, individuality, and equality of the sexes. They question authority and actualize this by being supportive of the trend toward less-hierarchical work structures.

According to the AARP (2004), Baby Boomers have had smaller families and enjoyed affluent lifestyles where they were able to get their wishes and desires met. This led to their being labeled the "Me Generation". With this has

come a trend away from long term relationships, both of personal and professional natures. Baby Boomers are 30% of the population, but represent the heart of today's management. They are leading a trend toward delayed retirement, with nearly 80% wanting to work at least part-time during retirement.

**Generation "X".** As children of the Baby Boomers, Generation "X" felt the effect of having both parents at work and the term "latchkey kids" was born. They entered the workplace with a perspective where they did not expect job security, pensions or a traditional career model. Having witnessed the loyalty of previous generations towards their employers rewarded with downsizing and lay-offs, Generation "X" is skeptical of the status quo and hierarchical relationships. They tend to be self-reliant, optimistic and confident. They value education, independence, and parenting above work. Within the workplace, they value a sense of belonging, teamwork and the ability to learn new things, autonomy and entrepreneurship. They believe a manager must earn respect rather than receive it simply by virtue of title, and their loyalty must be earned by mutual respect (Jurkiewicz, 2000).

**Generation "Y".** The newest employees entering the workplace are members of Generation "Y", also called the Millennials', also referred to as the "Internet Generation." Because they are the relatively largest generation since the Baby Boomers they have additionally been dubbed the Echo Boomers. They have watched and learned from the mistakes of their generational predecessors.

One study states:

They were exposed to diverse lifestyles and cultures in school and life at an early age, and tend to respect different race, ethnic and sexual groups. They are highly comfortable with diversity, one-third are members of a minority group, and they are accustomed to computer technology, immediacy, and multitasking. They have short attention spans, but value professional development and strive to work better and more efficiently. They seek creative challenges and projects with deadlines so they can build up ownership of their tasks. They want jobs with flexibility, telecommuting options, and the ability to work part-time or to leave the workforce temporarily when having children. (Bell & Narz, 2007, p. 57).

To further understand Generation “Y”, it is important to look at the world around them. Since the time of the Baby Boomers, many things have changed in the political, environmental, economic and technological landscape. This “Y” generation, unlike previous generations, was raised with the internet and cable TV allowing easy access to international news and media. Having the world literally right at their fingertip has resulted in a life that is faster and more accessible. Popularly characterized as the most technologically adept group in history, it is no secret that this generation has successfully differentiated itself from others, by virtue of its access to more information. They have developed the acumen to create time for themselves because they have been more structured and better organized than other generations. A February 2008 e-Marketer study

on United States internet users reported that 91% of Generation “Y” is on the Web, comprising about 32% of the national total (Tsai, 2008).

In the workplace, research indicates that members of Generation “Y” value their time more than money, training over job title, and flexibility over routine in their work schedules. They view work as an extension of their lives. They are not 9-5r’s and expect their managers to understand that. Given all of these characteristics, Streeter (2007) stated one surprising attribute of members of Generation “Y” is their preference for stable jobs; they tend to change jobs less frequently than Generation “X”.

A recent study on Generation “Y” (Laff, 2008), indicated that “the youngest workers are the most willing to go the extra mile when the economy tightens and job security becomes tenuous. A higher percentage of Generation “Y” workers strive to impress the boss, arrive earlier and are working later and taking on extra responsibilities than their older peers” (p. 18). A Randstad online survey of 2000 adults conducted when the economy began to tumble in August and September of 2008 indicated that 50% of Generation “Y” employees were willing to arrive early and stay late as compared to 40% of Generation “X” and 29% of Baby Boomers.

### **Coaching and Generation “Y”**

When coaching Generation “Y”, as is true of any of the generations, it is important to understand how to relate to their specific attributes to achieve the greatest success. Looking at the background and characteristics of each generation can be useful in understanding the distinctive talents and challenges

each individual brings to the workplace (CPA Journal; Feb 2007). According to Behrans (2009), integrating Millennials' (Generation "Y") into the workplace provides coaches and managers not only with a fresh set of challenges, but also with an equally fresh set of opportunities.

For example, having led highly scheduled and structured lives, Millennials may expect to not only be told what to do, but when to do it. Similarly, having spent hours and hours alone in front of their computers and game machines, they are extraordinarily techno-savvy and are exceptional problem solvers, but may have no clue how to work in teams or together in a department. On the other hand, having been taught inclusiveness from an early age, they are more tolerant of other races, nationalities and gender preferences than may be true of older workers and as such are receptive to instruction on teaming and collaboration. One suggestion offered by a number of training and development experts, is the use of "reverse-mentoring" in which the young employees coach the old in the finer points of computer technology, viral marketing, cutting-edge design, eco-sensitivity and the like. That approach not only takes advantage of Millennials unique skills, but also helps them become a contributor from day one (Milman, 2010). It may be possible for this mentoring relationship to be a two-way street with the more senior member offering guidance on interpersonal skills.

This can be important, given some of the challenges that Millennials may face when entering the workplace. Tsai (2008) suggests that (a) they require a new type of orientation at work that supports their technological desires, (b) they will need to be coached on team building skills and will need guidance on the

importance of persuasion in order to get organizational results, (c) they will need to be convinced that the organization will continue to progress in the technology arena and will offer them the chance to participate , (d) they require flexibility and respect in the work environment, and (e) they also require structure and challenges because they were raised in structured and scheduled environments.

These preferences and “requirements” by Generation “Y” can give them a sense of entitlement (Herbison & Boseman, 2009). This Millennial employee is quick to move if he or she does not feel he or she is receiving enough organizational support of his or her choosing. However he or she can be very loyal if he or she feels the organization is trying to work with his or her preferences.

In her book, *Retiring the Generational Gap*, Deal (2007) surveyed 3,200 individuals about their preferences of coaching. In this study participants were asked the questions; “Do you think coaching is useful for your development?”, “Whom do you want as a coach?”, “How do you want to interact with your coach?”, “How often do you want to interact with your coach?” and “What do you want the focus of the coaching relationship to be?” Deal found that “almost everyone wants a coach,” and that Millennials are no exception. Her study findings showed that younger people are constantly asking for feedback and cannot get enough of it. She found 85% of those surveyed in Generation “Y” stated they would like to receive feedback from a coach.

When it comes to the coaching interaction itself, Deal’s (2007) study stated that younger generations preferred face to face coaching rather than

coaching by e-mail or phone conversation. This is born out through on-line anecdotes discovered by this researcher, but other research sources were not found to confirm Deal's claim. She also found Millennials' preferred more frequent, weekly conversations than did the older generations who preferred less frequent bi-weekly or monthly conversations. As for the focus of the conversations, Generation "Y" expressed a broad scope such as their life or career to be the focus, whereas older generations preferred a narrower scope of focus such as leadership development or their current job.

### **Summary**

Coaching is a profession that helps individuals explore their personal and professional growth, in a holistic proactive way, while in a supporting, safe and nurturing environment. The earliest references to coaching refer to athletic coaches and managers. However, it was not until the 1990's that the term "executive coach" became popular. As the economy strengthened and grew so did the need and acceptance for coaches. Coaching is an intervention at the individual level of which the results can help grow companies. Coaching enhances the impact of executives, increases their speed in becoming effective within the organization, and improves overall job satisfaction and retention (Talkington, Voss, & Wise, 2002). The authors stated:

Coaching is one of the principal tools businesses have for developing their people. It is an especially useful tool at the executive level because busy executives have few others assisted means of continued development. In

one study, training alone increased productivity by 22%, but when training was paired with coaching productivity increased by 88%. (p. 32).

In the workplace today there are 3 different generations employed, all exhibiting unique qualities and characteristics. The oldest are the Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964. They are characterized by social change and affluence and were the healthiest and wealthiest generation to that time. Boomers exhibit significant respect for institutional hierarchy, structure and information. Generation "X", born between 1965 and 1976, are characterized by the expansion of mass media and the advent of technology. Generation "X" grew up in a completely different world, where divorce and working mothers created "latch-key" kids out of many in this generation. As a result, they tend to be independent, resilient and adaptable in the workplace. Generation "Y" (Millennials) were born between 1977 and 1988 and are characterized by the rise of instant communication technologies; that is, the Internet, MySpace, and Facebook. Generation "Y" was raised at the most child-centric time in history. Showers of attention and high expectations from parents fostered a great deal of self confidence, a high need for structure and a strong desire for feedback.

Newest to the workplace, Generation "Y" is perhaps the most in need of coaching. The good news is they respond well to personal attention. They appreciate structure and stability, therefore coaching Generation "Y" should be more formal with set meetings and the coach should use a more authoritative attitude. However, since this generation is new to the workplace, there is still more to learn about them and how to effectively coach them.



This chapter provided an overview of coaching, including definitions of coaching, models of coaching, primary coaching skills, relationship characteristics, and coaching outcomes. Second, this chapter discussed the different generations found in the workplace today and reviewed primary characteristics. Third, the chapter presented what is known about coaching members of Generation “Y”.

The primary objective of this research project is to explore coaching preferences of Generation “Y”. Understanding these preferences can help coaching effectiveness. The next chapter discusses the methodology employed in the design and evaluation of this research project. It includes descriptions of the data collection approach and questionnaire development, the selection of participants and methods used to analyze the data.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore coaching preferences of individuals in Generation “Y”. This chapter presents the methods used in this study. Data were collected using both a questionnaire and a structured interview protocol. Attributes of the sample are described along with the way in which the data would be analyzed.

This study used surveys and structured interviews to identify coaching preferences of Generation “Y”. The sampling strategy included surveys conducted with members of Generation “Y” and structured interviews with individuals who provide coaching services and have expertise working with Generation “Y”. The questionnaire used in this study was created as result of the researcher’s literature review. Questionnaires were reviewed in this study by subject matter experts with an in depth content analysis of the data gathered as result of the study.

This study used a questionnaire to assess the coaching preferences of Generation “Y”. Items assessing coaching preferences were generated based on the literature review. Forty questions were generated to either refute or affirm the assertions made by the authors (see Appendixes A and B). Subject areas were categorized as who, where, what, when, why, and how. Questions used a Likert scale to rate preferences along with an open section to for additional comments (see Appendix B). 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 neither Agree nor

Disagree, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. The questions are listed in Appendix A by category of who, what, where, when, why, and how.

All methods used in this study were in compliance with the guidelines put forth by the Institutional Review Board. The questionnaires used in this study for data collection posed minimal harm or risk to participants. Participants of this study were volunteers and could withdraw at any time. All information will remain confidential. Appendix C contains the participant and subject matter expert consent forms.

### **Sample and Administration of Questionnaire**

Fifty-one questionnaires were distributed in public areas where Generation “Y” members were likely to be found such as areas adjacent to coffee houses, snack bars, bus stops, parks, etc. and given to those who identified themselves as members of Generation “Y”. Members of Generation “Y” verified such status through self report of birth years.

### **Subject Matter Experts**

Experienced MSOD consultants who identified themselves as having a coaching practice were approached for participation as subject matter experts (SMEs). Volunteers were requested from referrals from MSOD alumni. In order to be included in the study participants should identify themselves as having had experience or interest in coaching Generation “Y”. Three SMEs were asked to verify their expertise by stating their experience related to the field of coaching

## **Generation “Y” Individuals**

The results of the survey were submitted to the coaching subject matter experts (SMEs) for review. These expert interviews were conducted face-to-face or via telephone at a mutually agreed upon time according to the preferences of the SMEs.

## **Interview Protocol**

A structured interview composed of six questions was developed for the subject matter expert interviews. (see Appendix B) Each question was open ended to allow for spontaneous responses regarding the data to gain a deeper understanding of the data's meaning.

## **Data Analysis**

Questionnaire data were measured and charted to identify trends and themes. They were categorized by questions and analyzed to reveal a snapshot of what Generation “Y” perceived about coaching and to identify their preferences. Qualtrics Survey Evaluation was used to assist with compilation and analysis. Once the questionnaires were completed this researcher analyzed the responses to identify categories of who, where, what, when, why, and how Generation “Y” individuals would prefer to be coached.

Open ended comments were clustered and aligned with the 40 questions to look for areas of emphasis, support and contrast with the Likert scaled items. Illustrative comments were then assembled to show the main themes presented.

Subject matter expert interview data were recorded using pen and paper during the interviews. Data were analyzed for major themes and triangulated with the questionnaire responses and literature review.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of the methodology are outlined below:

1. Small sample size limits the validity of findings.
2. Participants were selected randomly and did not have any prior knowledge of the study. Participants may have been pre-occupied and not solely focused on this study which may have affected their input.
3. Participants experience with coaching may be limited thus affecting input.

Although these limitations must be considered, valuable results can still be found in this study. The stated limitations may also offer insights to aid future researchers in similar studies.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

The purpose of this research was to explore coaching preferences of individuals from Generation “Y.” This chapter presents the results of the data collection and analysis in three parts: questionnaire data, interview data with subject matter experts, and a comparison of the two data sources.

The first part presented questionnaire data collected from 51 participants according to category of: From whom does Generation “Y” wish to receive coaching? About what does Generation “Y” prefer to receive coaching? Where does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached? When does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached? Why does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached? How does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached? Questionnaire data were analyzed by calculating means and presented in tables according to category. Then a summary of open section comments completed by participants is presented. The second part presented interview data collected from three subject matter experts which was content analyzed with themes identified. Questionnaire and interview data were compared looking for thematic similarities and differences and the result is shown in the third part of the chapter.

#### Questionnaire Data

**Sample demographics.** Fifty one individuals participated in the study. Participants were eligible to participate if they identified themselves as being born into Generation “Y,” meaning they were born between 1977 and 1988. Twenty

three of the participants were female and 28 were male. Below are the data findings that were collected.

**Would you like to work with a coach?** When asked if they would like to work with a professional coach, 32 of the 51 (63%) participants stated they would. 10 of the 51(20%) participants stated they had previously worked with one.

**From whom does Generation “Y” wish to receive coaching?** When participants were asked if they would prefer to receive coaching from either a professional or executive coach, an expert in their field, a senior colleague in the workplace or from a peer, participants stated a slight preference towards an expert in their field (4.18) compared to a professional/executive coach (4.08). The data showed that participants are neutral towards coaching from a senior colleague or peer.

Table 1

*Means of Preferences for WHO They Wish to Receive Coaching From (n = 51)*

Mean (SD)

I would prefer coaching from a professional or executive coach. 4.08 (0.76)
I would prefer coaching from an expert in my field. 4.18 (0.84)
I would prefer coaching from a more senior colleague within my workplace. 3.22 (0.97)
I prefer coaching from a peer. 3.06 (0.95)

### About what does Generation “Y” prefer to receive coaching?

Participants were asked what they prefer coaching about. Participants stated a preference towards coaching that relates to their professional field, communication skills, leadership and career development and how to obtain a promotion were stated as the strongest reasons to have coaching. Next, is the desire to learn how to work with difficult people. Interesting to point out however, data suggests participants showed less interest in coaching around organizational politics, their relationship with their manager or how to manage their reputation within their company.

Table 2

#### *Means of Preferences for WHAT Generation “Y” Wishes to Receive Coaching*

*About (n = 51)*

Mean (SD)

I would prefer coaching that relates to my professional field. 3.84 (0.85)
I would prefer coaching that relates to leadership development. 3.90 (0.90)
I would prefer coaching that develops communication skills. 4.00 (1.25)
I would prefer coaching that focuses on career development. 4.02 (0.86)
I would prefer coaching that focuses on organizational politics. 3.06 (1.12)
I would prefer coaching on how to work with difficult people. 3.68 (0.85)
I would prefer coaching around the relationship with my Manager. 3.34 (1.07)
I would prefer coaching on how to manage my reputation within my company. 3.46 (0.86)
I would prefer coaching on how to obtain a higher salary and/or get a bigger promotion. 3.94 (0.77)



**Where does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached?** According to the data, participants appear to be less concerned with where coaching takes place. Based on this survey Generation “Y” shows a preference in coaching outside of work. However, the mean in both cases is low ( $M=3.32$  to  $3.58$ ) and reflects that participants show little concern as to where coaching takes place.

Table 3

*Means of Preferences for WHERE Generation “Y” Prefers to be Coached*

*(n = 51)*

Mean (SD)

I would prefer coaching be done at my workplace. 3.32 (1.05)
I would prefer coaching be done outside of my workplace (coffee shop, park, etc.). 3.58 (1.04)

**When does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached?** Participants were asked when or how often they would prefer to be coached. When asked if they preferred coaching weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, during work or outside of work, the data suggests little preference as to when participants preferred coaching. However data do reflect a slight preference towards coaching during work hours. Participants were also asked how long they prefer to be coached. When asked if they preferred coaching that lasted less than an hour, 1-2 hours or half a day, answers show a preference towards coaching that lasted less than an hour ( $M=3.44$ ). It is interesting to note that participants clearly disagreed with coaching that lasted half a day ( $M=2.56$ ). In summary, participants preferred coaching that occurred once a month, performed during business hours and lasted less than an hour.

Table 4

*Means of Preferences for WHEN Generation “Y” Wishes to be Coached (n = 51)*

Mean (SD)

I would prefer weekly coaching. 3.18 (1.20)
I would prefer coaching every other week. 3.08 (0.98)
I would prefer coaching once a month. 3.28 (1.10)
I would prefer coaching during normal business hours. 3.54 (0.94)
I would prefer coaching outside of normal business hours. 3.00(1.21)
I would prefer coaching last less than one hour. 3.44 (1.07)
I would prefer coaching last from 1 to 2 hours. 3.34 (1.07)
I would prefer coaching last half a day. 2.56 (0.98)

**Why does Generation “Y” want to be coached?** The strongest opinions of this survey occurred when participants were asked why they preferred to be coached. This survey asked participants if they preferred coaching around personal or professional growth, assistance with self awareness and how others perceive them, help with problem solving or a safe place to explore new ideas. All topics were clearly expressed in this survey as a reason for which to be coached. With a mean ranging from 4.16 to 4.48 the data suggests ALL areas of this survey were perceived as worthwhile reasons to be coached. Participants did not disagree with any of the items suggested.

Table 5

*Means of Preferences for WHY Generation “Y” Prefers to be Coached (n = 51)*

Mean (SD)

Coaching can help develop personal growth. 4.38 (0.83)
Coaching can help develop professional growth. 4.54 (0.54)
Coaching can help me learn about myself. 4.40 (0.68)
Coaching can help me learn about how others perceive me. 4.30 (0.71)
Coaching can explore creative solutions to the problems that I am having. 4.48 (0.70)
Coaching can be a way to test out ideas before I take action. 4.40 (0.51)
Coaching can be a safe place to talk and experiment. 4.16 (0.68)

**How does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached?** When asked should coaching be face-to-face, over the phone or “on-line”, results showed that the preference was overwhelmingly face-to face (M=4.56). Interesting to note though, a generation known for their technological competence expressed disagreement towards coaching on the telephone and on-line with a low means of 2.32.

Not surprising however was the preference for coaching that was structured, as expressed in the data (M=3.98). Interest in having homework and reading literature about their field were not as strong. In addition, when asked if they would contribute to the cost of their coaching, results were mixed ranging from means of M=2.50 to 3.62. Essentially participants in this study preferred coaching only if their company paid for it. For those participants (M=3.62) who said they would contribute, the data showed that participants would be most comfortable paying 5-10% of the cost.

Table 6

*Means of Preferences for HOW Generation “Y” Prefers to be Coached (n = 51)*

Mean (SD)

I would prefer coaching that is face-to-face. 4.56 (0.80)
I would prefer coaching that is done over the phone. 2.38 (1.32)
I would prefer coaching that is done 'on-line'. 2.32 (1.06)
I would prefer coaching that is very structured. 3.98 (0.94)
I would prefer to have homework in between coaching sessions. 3.52 (0.83)
I would like to read and discuss books and articles related to my field. 3.52 (0.58)
I would only be interested in coaching if my company paid for it. 3.50 (1.02)
If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 5-10%. 3.62 (0.94)
If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 11-25% 3.22 (1.10)
If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 25-50% 2.50 (1.09)

### Summary of Open Section Comments

While participants were asked to share their thoughts in the open section at the end of the survey, few chose to utilize the opportunity. The four statements received expressed a positive impact from coaching received. Each of these had prior experience in coaching and stated they benefited not only from their time with the coach, but have also integrated what they have learned in their lives years later. One participant stated, “I have had the great honor of having a professional coach and it was a great experience. To this day I still use the skills and knowledge that I learned in my everyday life.” Another participant stated, “My life has benefited both personally and professionally due to my time with a

coach.” In general, the four participant statements mentioned they found benefit in both professional and personal coaching.

### **Subject Matter Expert Interview Data**

**Subject Matter Expert Demographics.** Three subject matter experts (SMEs), whose experience in coaching ranged from 15 to 40 years, consented to be interviewed. Two were male and one was female. As part of their coaching practices, they identified themselves as having experience coaching Generation “Y” during the last decade: one SME currently coaches thirty, another coaches six and the last stated it was the bulk of the practice. Further, each SME was hired by his or her coachee’s organization.

Study results were shared with the SMEs prior to the interviews so that they could consider the data and their implications for coaching Generation “Y.”

#### ***From whom does Generation “Y” wish to receive coaching?***

According to subject matter experts (SMEs), individuals in Generation “Y” prefer coaching from someone familiar or skilled in the client’s field of work. All three SMEs agreed that individuals also preferred coaching from someone outside of their organization. One SME stated that “the trust needed to build a successful coaching relationship could not be obtained by coaching performed by someone inside a client’s organization such as a peer or senior colleague.” In her experience, one SME stated, “Generation “Y” client’s expressed a concern about breeches of confidentiality when coached by someone within their workplace.”

**About what does Generation “Y” prefer to receive coaching?** When asked what Generation “Y” clients preferred coaching about, SMEs agreed on three areas: communication skills was the most prevalent request, followed by leadership style, and then relationship building.

The focus on communication skills stems from a need to establish stronger relationships with their managers, colleagues and subordinates but is also a desired skill for those who want to become more qualified and suitable leaders. In one interviewer’s opinion, Generation “Y” clients are keenly aware this skill is important to develop when seeking a promotion.

SMEs stated that development of leadership skills was another area desired by Generation “Y” client’s. One SME mentioned, “Leadership skills were important to one of my clients due to the fact that this client did not respect or agree with their (sic) current manager’s leadership style. This client wanted to learn how to manage with a less aggressive authority.” In this SME’s opinion this may reflect a disdain towards current leadership in the workplace by Generation “Y”.

According to all SMEs, relationship building was another preferred area of development expressed by Generation “Y” clients. Two of the SMEs stated that relationship building was a focus of their clients due to strained relationships with their managers. Their clients sought help in this area to resolve those issues. Another SME stated, “Many of my Generation “Y” clients sought guidance in relationship building as an attempt to build stronger teams.”

**Where does Generation “Y” preferred to be coached?** When it came to where Generation “Y” preferred to be coached SME opinions were mixed. One SME stated that Generation “Y” clients did not want to be seen with their coach therefore all coaching meetings took place either on the phone or outside of work premises. Another SME stated that all of her coaching appointments were at the client’s workplace. The third SME interviewed stated that some of his clients preferred coaching at their workplace while others preferred to be coached outside of their work.

**When does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached?** When SMEs were asked how often their Generation “Y” clients preferred to be coached, all agreed that one time per month was the general preference. SMEs stated the reason for this preference was due to their client’s busy schedules. Opinions were slightly mixed when participants were asked how long their clients preferred to be coached. Two of the SMEs stated their client’s preferred coaching sessions last less than an hour while the third SME stated her coaching sessions lasted about two hours.

There was a consensus again when participants were asked if their clients preferred coaching during or outside of work hours. All SMEs stated their client’s preferred coaching within working hours. It was one SME’s opinion that Generation “Y” preferred coaching within business hours due to their respect for personal or family time which in his opinion they hold sacred.

**Why does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached?** When asked why Generation “Y” wants to be coached SMEs expressed differences of opinion. One SME stated that his clients preferred coaching on professional growth as a means to get ahead in their companies. While another SME stated that Generation “Y” perceived having a coach as a status symbol or a “badge of honor” that reflected their company’s willingness to invest into them. She stated that her clients saw it as a prestigious perquisite, or possible entitlement, to have a professional coach. This opinion was shared by another SME who stated that her clients saw coaching as a resume builder and a way to get up the corporate ladder. Another SME stated that her organizational clients hired her because it was trendy to have a coach.

In each case, SMEs stated they were hired either to maximize developmental opportunities for high potential employees or to remediate poor employee performance. In both cases, Generation “Y” coachees welcomed the coaching opportunity and individualized attention.

**How does Generation “Y” prefer to be coached?** According to two SMEs, the majority of their Generation “Y” clients preferred face to face coaching meetings. One SME stated that on-line coaching was never requested unless it involved some type of training, and phone meetings were only used if the client’s schedule was too busy to meet in person. Another SME stated however, that his clients preferred coaching on the phone with exception of their first session which required a face-to-face meeting. In his opinion, his clients wanted a coach but did not want anyone to know that they were being coached. He sensed in his clients



a possible stigma attached to having a coach along with a possible concern of appearing incompetent to others in their organization.

When SMEs were asked if their clients preferred structured coaching with reading assignments opinions again were mixed. Two of the SMEs stated their clients not only preferred a given structure, but also preferred being told what to do rather than work through and identify needs themselves. In addition, the same two SMEs expressed that their clients showed little interest in homework between sessions or any desire to read relevant literature. One SME however felt it was her job to offer clients structure and explicit feedback. In her opinion, clients sought training in a coaching set-up. This by nature was not led by the client and her clients preferred to rely on her leadership. In her experience homework and relevant reading is part of the coaching experience.

When SMEs were asked how they were compensated, all stated they were paid by the coachee's employer. Each SME also stated his or her coachee showed little interest in personally contributing to the cost of the coaching experience. Two of the SMEs noted that some of their clients projected a sense of entitlement, that coaching for them was not a privilege but an entitlement or perquisite inherent in their position.

### **Questionnaire and Interview Data Comparison**

**Who?** Both survey data and subject matter experts agreed that Generation "Y" individuals prefer to be coached by a professional coach with expertise in their field. In addition, both agreed that Generation "Y" individuals preferred not to be coached by a senior colleague or peer from their workplace.

Both also agreed that coaching from someone outside of the organization was preferred.

**What?** Questionnaire data and SMEs both state Generation “Y” predominantly desired coaching around communication skills. In addition, both agreed leadership development, career development, and coaching that related to their professional field were the preferred areas of coaching. Both questionnaire and interview data agreed there was a preference towards coaching that assisted one in obtaining a promotion.

A couple areas of disagreement are worth noting. First, while questionnaire data suggests less interest in relationship building SMEs stated this topic was a popular area of focus by their coaching clients. Second, according to questionnaire data there was little interest in coaching around organizational politics or how to manage their reputation. SMEs however stated this area was important to their clients.

**Where?** When asked where Generation “Y” prefers to be coached, questionnaire data showed a slight preference towards coaching outside of the workplace. This however was not supported by two SME interviews which concurred that coaching meetings took place at the workplace. One SME did state however that most of his coaching meetings were outside of the workplace. According to this SME his clients did not want to be seen with a coach.

**When?** Questionnaire data and SME interviews both stated a preference towards coaching that occurs once a month and lasted less than an hour conducted during business hours.

**Why?** The highest mean responses were generated in response to questions about why Generation “Y” preferred to be coached. Survey participants and SMEs strongly agreed that they wanted coaching around personal or professional growth, assistance with self awareness and how others perceive them, help with problem solving or a safe place to explore new ideas.

**How?** Questionnaire data clearly showed Generation “Y”s preference for face to face coaching. They showed little interest in coaching performed on the phone or on-line. SMEs also stated their clients showed little interest in on-line coaching.

SMEs’ opinions however, were mixed around face-to-face and phone coaching. This may have been due more to coaching stylistics then to client preferences as some SMEs preferred face-to-face themselves and others preferred to work remotely.

Survey participants and SMEs also agreed on a preference towards structured coaching. The questionnaire data suggested a possible desire for homework and relevant literature, but two SMEs stated they saw little preference for this in their coaching with Generation “Y” clients.

Lastly, participants of this survey stated an interest in coaching only if their company paid for it. This was supported by SMEs who stated they were all paid

by client corporations and saw little personal contribution by the coachees themselves.

This chapter presented the findings of the study. These are summarized in chapter five and conclusions about the coaching preferences from Generation “Y” are drawn. Recommendations are made to OD practitioners who have coaching practices. Limitations are revealed and suggestions for further research are made.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this research was to explore coaching preferences of Generation “Y.” This chapter reviews the summary of findings, study conclusions and interpretations, recommendations to OD coaches, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

#### **Summary of Findings**

Coaching preferences of Generation “Y” are condensed and shown below following the sequence presented in previous chapters:

1. Generation “Y” prefer coaching from someone outside of their daily workplace that is a professional or executive coach or expert in his or her chosen field.
2. Generation “Y” prefer coaching that relates to their profession, communication skills, leadership, and how to build productive relationships and obtain promotions (career guidance).
3. Generation “Y” preference on where to be coached varied depending on individual attitude towards coaching. If coaching is viewed as prestigious then they preferred to receive coaching at work in full view of others. However, if coaching is not viewed favorably then they preferred meetings be conducted outside of the workplace for fear of embarrassment or of looking incompetent.
4. Generation “Y” individuals preferred coaching that occurred once a month, performed during business hours and lasted less than an hour.

5. Generation “Y” individuals who provided rationale for why they wanted coaching, stated they preferred it around professional or personal growth and also around creative problem solving.

6. Generation “Y” individuals preferred face-to-face coaching rather than on-line.

### **Conclusions and Interpretations**

Based on this study the key conclusions and interpretations that emerged included:

1. Generation “Y” prefer coaching from someone outside of their workplace that is a professional or executive coach or expert in his or her chosen field. A coach from outside of their workplace provides an unbiased look at their situations and allows for greater confidentiality. This study found some Generation “Y” individuals preferred their coaching not to be public knowledge. This aligns with Tsai (2008) who wrote about coachees strong need to be viewed with respect. This preference towards confidential coaching may actually be more reflective of an organizational culture that denigrates those who “need” coaching. An organizational culture that openly supports coaching as a mark of prestige would most likely not produce the same preference for confidentiality.
2. Generation “Y” prefer coaching that occurred once a month, performed during business hours, and last less than an hour. Deal’s survey (2007) found that Generation “Y” wanted more

frequent, weekly conversations. This study did not find data to support her research. While this may be due to busy schedules and an inability to schedule weekly sessions, the preference towards monthly meetings was prominent throughout this study where both subject matter experts and study participants agreed. This aligns with Streeter (2007), who emphasized Generation “Y’s” need for lifestyle balance and leisure time.

### 3. Generation “Y” needs coaching around relationship building.

According to Milman (2010), having spent hours and hours alone in front of their computers and game machines, they are extraordinarily techno-savvy and are exceptional problem solvers, but may have no clue how to work in teams or how to collaborate with other workers in a department. This study showed communication skills and leadership skills were both areas in which Generation “Y” wanted coaching. This may be derivative of the desire to build stronger relationships with co-workers and stronger teams.

### 4. Image and respect matter to Generation “Y.”

While respondents stated they were less interested in coaching around organizational politics, their relationship with their manager or how to manage their reputation within their company, they also reported a propensity for concern about embarrassment. A possible explanation for this contradiction is that Generation “Y” are attempting to manage the

impressions they make on others and appear competent, when in fact they may feel insecure and actually desire help. Laff (2008) found that a higher percentage of Generation “Y” versus “X” and “Baby Boomers” want to impress the boss.

### **Recommendations to OD Coaches**

The following recommendations are made based on the study’s findings. These are offered with the intention of making available information that may be important to professional coaches as they come into more frequent contact with clients populated by Generation “Y”.

1. Face to Face: Though technologically-savvy, Generation “Y” most often prefer coaching in person. They eschew coaching on-line or telephone.
2. Communication and Leadership Skills: Generation “Y” want to learn how to build productive relationships and obtain promotions (career guidance). They also show strong interest in learning more about creative problem solving.
3. Frequency and Duration: Generation “Y” prefer coaching that occurs once a month, performed during business hours, and last less than an hour. This may be due to their busy work schedules coupled with their desire for personal time.
4. Payment of fees: Generation “Y” strongly prefer that their organizations provide support in both time and cost for coaching. They hold a position of entitlement and see coaching as a



perquisite accorded to them as a result of their loyalty and commitment to the organization.

5. Homework: Generation “Y” prefer not to have any homework assigned by their coaches, nor do they wish to be given relevant reading. They want coaching at the scheduled time, and then they wish to enjoy their lifestyle and leisure time unencumbered by work obligations.

### **Limitations**

The results of this study are lessened by the limitations inherent in its design and implementation which include:

1. Small sample size limits the validity of findings. The questionnaire was only taken by 51 respondents and as such cannot be used to generalize the Generation “Y” population at large.
2. Participants did not have any prior knowledge of the study nor time to ponder at length their points-of-view. Participants may have been pre-occupied and not solely focused on this study which may have affected the quality of their input.
3. Participant answers of those who had worked with coaches and those who had not were combined, making differentiation not possible. For those without prior experience with coaching they may have imagined what they would like rather than reporting true preferences.

4. For the sake of efficiency, the survey lacked definitions of common words in use and could have meant different things to different people. For example, communication skills could be translated differently by each individual thus affecting their opinion.
5. Limited number of subject matter experts and the possible lack of Generation “Y’s” experience with coaching may have had an impact on the findings in this study.
6. As this study was confined to Generation “Y,” it is unknown whether the findings are reflective of this generation exclusively, or are characteristics of other generations as well.

Although these limitations must be considered, valuable results can still be found in this study. The stated limitations may also offer insights to aid future researchers in similar studies.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The following is a list of several suggestions that could further expand on this study:

1. The first suggestion is to test a larger and more diverse group of people. This study focused on a homogenous group of college educated, middle class, mostly white, students from Southern California. This study could be expanded to include a more diverse group of people in order to determine a greater understanding of coaching preferences by Generation “Y” at large.

2. The next suggestion is to use a survey which allows the participant to elaborate on their answers. For example, if a participant selects communication skills as a reason for coaching, it could be helpful to know how that participant defines communication skills and what in particular he or she wanted to strengthen in that area.

3. Another way to establish greater validity of Generation “Y” preferences could be to widen the scope of this survey. If individuals of the Baby Boomer and “X” generation were surveyed, the results could be used to compare and calibrate the results of the Generation “Y” survey and lead to greater understanding.

### **Closing Comments**

As coaches prepare to work with Generation “Y” clients, it is important to understand how this new generation differs from previous generations. This knowledge could assist coaches in customizing their approach to address client needs and expectations, and lead to greater results for increased client capability. Coachees can benefit from this study by gaining greater clarity on their goals, and also through the improved skills of their coaches to help them gain greater self mastery (efficacy). In summary, popular approaches and prevailing wisdom are in need of a stronger research base determining key coaching preferences of Generation “Y” which could strengthen the foundation of knowledge in the field. Further it would provide coaches with important information to instill greater confidence in their practice.

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## Appendix A

## List of Questions by Authors

**Who**

I would prefer coaching from a professional or executive coach.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching from an expert in my field.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching from a more senior colleague within my workplace.	Deal, 2007
I prefer coaching from a peer.	Tsai, 2008

**What**

I would prefer coaching that relates to my professional field.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching that relates to leadership development.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching that develops communication skills.	Tsai, 2008
I would prefer coaching that focuses on career development.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching that focuses on organizational politics.	Tsai, 2008
I would prefer coaching on how to work with difficult people.	Tsai, 2008
I would prefer coaching around the relationship with my Manager.	Tsai, 2008
I would prefer coaching on how to manage my reputation within my company.	Herbison & Boseman, 2009
I would prefer coaching on how to obtain a higher salary and/or get a bigger promotion.	Herbison & Boseman, 2009

**When**

I would prefer weekly coaching.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching every other week.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching once a month.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching during normal business hours.	Laff, 2008
I would prefer coaching outside of normal business hours.	Laff, 2008
I would prefer coaching last less than one hour.	Laff, 2008
I would prefer coaching last from 1 to 2 hours.	Laff, 2008
I would prefer coaching last half a day.	Laff, 2008

## Why

Coaching can help develop personal growth.	Tsai, 2008
Coaching can help develop professional growth.	Tsai, 2008
Coaching can help me learn about myself.	Milman, 2010
Coaching can help me learn about how others perceive me.	Milman, 2010
Coaching can explore creative solutions to the problems that I am having.	Milman, 2010
Coaching can be a way to test out ideas before I take action.	Milman, 2010
Coaching can be a safe place to talk and experiment.	Whitworth, et al., 2007

## How

I would prefer coaching that is face-to-face.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching that is done over the phone.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching that is done 'on-line'.	Deal, 2007
I would prefer coaching that is very structured.	Bell & Narz, 2007
I would prefer to have homework in between coaching sessions.	Bell & Narz, 2007
I would like to read and discuss books and articles related to my field.	Bell & Narz, 2007
I would only be interested in coaching if my company paid for it.	Laff, 2008
If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 5-10%.	Laff, 2008
If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 11-25%	Laff, 2008
If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 25-50%	Laff, 2008

## Where

I would prefer coaching be done at my workplace.	Laff, 2008
I would prefer coaching be done outside of my workplace (coffee shop, park, etc.)	Laff, 2008



## Appendix B

### Generation “Y” Questionnaire and Subject Matter Expert Interview

## GENERATION Y Questionnaire

**Part I. Please answer the following questions about your preferences of characteristics of coaching.:**

Coaching is defined as a method of directing a person to achieve specific goals or skills.

1. I was born between 1977 and 1988 - Yes/ No (please circle one)
2. Male/ Female (please circle one)
3. I have worked with a professional coach - Yes/ No (please circle one)
4. I would like to work with a professional coach - Yes/No (please circle one)

**Part II. Indicate whether you Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree:**

	5 - Strongly Agree	4 - Agree	3 - Neither	2 - Disagree	1 - Strongly Disagree
1 I would prefer coaching from a professional or executive coach.					
2 I would prefer coaching from an expert in my field.					
3 I would prefer coaching from a more senior colleague within my workplace.					
4 I prefer coaching from a peer.					
5 I would prefer coaching that relates to my professional field.					
6 I would prefer coaching that relates to leadership development.					
7 I would prefer coaching that develops communication skills.					
8 I would prefer coaching that focuses on career development.					
9 I would prefer coaching that focuses on organizational politics.					
10 I would prefer coaching on how to work with difficult people.					
11 I would prefer coaching around the relationship with my Manager.					
12 I would prefer coaching on how to manage my reputation within my company.					
13 I would prefer coaching on how to obtain a higher salary and/or get a bigger promotion.					
<b>NOW:</b> For Questions 1-13, circle the number above that represents the most important area for you (you can circle more than one if you would like). After you have finished, please proceed.					
14 I would prefer coaching be done at my workplace.					
15 I would prefer coaching be done outside of my workplace (coffee shop, park, etc.)					
16 I would prefer weekly coaching.					
17 I would prefer coaching every other week.					
18 I would prefer coaching once a month.					
19 I would prefer coaching during normal business hours.					
20 I would prefer coaching outside of normal business hours.					
21 I would prefer coaching last less than one hour.					
22 I would prefer coaching last from 1 to 2 hours.					
23 I would prefer coaching last half a day.					
24 Coaching can help develop personal growth.					
25 Coaching can help develop professional growth.					
26 Coaching can help me learn about myself.					
27 Coaching can help me learn about how others perceive me.					
28 Coaching can explore creative solutions to the problems that I am having.					
29 Coaching can be a way to test out ideas before I take action.					
30 Coaching can be a safe place to talk and experiment.					
31 I would prefer coaching that is face-to-face.					
32 I would prefer coaching that is done over the phone.					
33 I would prefer coaching that is done 'on-line'.					
34 I would prefer coaching that is very structured.					
35 I would prefer to have homework in between coaching sessions.					
36 I would like to read and discuss books and articles related to my field.					
37 I would only be interested in coaching if my company paid for it.					
38 If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 5-10%.					
39 If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 11-25%					
40 If I had to share the cost with my company I would be willing to pay 25-50%					

**Coaching Preferences of Generation “Y”  
Interview/Questionnaire  
Subject Matter Expert**

**Identity and Background**

Male/female

Number of years coaching

**Question Protocol**

1. Please review the data I sent you for our discussion.
2. What aspects surprised you?
3. What aspects confirmed the way you see the world of consulting with  
Generation “Y”?
4. What do you think of the data overall?
  - a. Do these align up with your experience?
  - b. In what way? Or not?
5. What advice do you have for other coaches who want to work with  
Generation “Y”?
6. Anything else you would like to offer?

## Appendix C

## Participant and Subject Matter Expert Consent Forms

*Participant Consent Form*

## Consent to participate in a Research Study

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Coaching Preferences of Generation “Y”.

RESEARCHER’S NAME AND AFFILIATION: Kevin C. Knight Principal researcher, current graduate student at the Graziadio School of Business, Pepperdine, University, Malibu, Ca. Research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Organizational Development.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist research efforts to better understand how “coaches” can work more effectively with Generation “Y”. **While there will likely be no direct benefit to participants, there may be societal benefits from the study in that a better understanding of how to coach Generation “Y” professionals could translate to greater personal and professional satisfaction and effectiveness. Questionnaires pose no risk to subjects and should have no impact.**

PROCUDURES: You will participate by completing the attached questionnaire. It should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about your preferences in coaching style. Your responses will be pooled with others and will be summarized in order to indentify common themes.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The results of information the researcher learned from the survey may be published in the form of articles, a book, or a research report; however you will not be identified by name. **Only summarized information will be reported and no comments will be attributed to any participant. You can withdraw at any time. All consent forms will be held separate from the data collected therefore disconnecting data from participant names. The questionnaires will not ask specific information to identify participants. Data will be kept for 1 year and housed with the principal investigator in a locked cabinet at which time it will be destroyed.**

If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact Terri Egan, Ph.D at [Terri.egan@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Terri.egan@pepperdine.edu) or call 310-568-5598.

**If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Doug Leigh, chairperson of the Pepperdine University Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) at (310) 568-2839.**

Thank You,

*Subject Matter Expert Consent Form*

Consent to participate in a Research Study

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Coaching Preferences of Generation “Y”.

RESEARCHER'S NAME AND AFFILIATION: Kevin C. Knight Principal researcher, current graduate student at the Graziadio School of Business, Pepperdine, University, Malibu, Ca. Research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Organizational Development.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this interview is to assist research efforts to better understand how “coaches” can work more effectively with Generation “Y”. **While there will likely be no direct benefit to participants, there may be societal benefits from the study in that a better understanding of how to coach Generation “Y” professionals could translate to greater personal and professional satisfaction and effectiveness. Interviews pose no risk to subjects and should have no impact.**

PROCUDURES: You will participate by answering questions based on questionnaire data that has been collected from Generation “Y” participants. It should take about 30- 45 minutes. Your responses will be pooled with two other subject matter experts will be summarized in order to indentify common themes.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The results of information the researcher learns from the surveys may be published in the form of articles, a book, or a research report; however you will not be identified by name. **Only summarized information will be reported and no comments will be attributed to any participant. You can withdraw at any time. All consent forms will be held separate from the data collected therefore disconnecting data from participant names. The questionnaires will not ask specific information to identify participants. Data will be kept for 1 year and housed with the principal investigator in a locked cabinet at which time it will be destroyed.**

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Thank You,